



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on January 27, 2011

Egyptian Protests Turn Violent, Mimic Tunisian Uprising

The government has been suppressing dissent by intermittently [censoring Internet social networking sites](#) and deploying riot police to disperse any peaceful protests. The peaceful protests that marked the rallies the first day [turned violent](#) January 25 after Mubarak banned any anti-government rallies, and the Egyptian [stock market plunged](#) 10 percent on rumors that Mubarak is planning to flee the country.



Like [Tunisia](#), Egypt has been ruled for 30 years by a "President" who has reigned over a corrupt and increasingly unpopular government. Mubarak has ruled since his predecessor, Anwar Sadat, was shot down by an assassin's bullet in 1981. A couple of recent highly publicized torture incidents ([here](#) and [here](#)) by the police, coupled with the controversial [Wikileaks revelations last November](#), may have provided the needed spark for the Internet-organized protests. Egyptian police are known for [brutal torture techniques](#) and were [used by the Bush administration to outsource torture under the extraordinary rendition program](#). Wikileaks has [released new information](#) on Egypt over the past 24 hours.

Arabic press agency Al Jazeera [reported](#) January 27 that a police station in Gaza had been torched by protesters in response to mass arrests across the nation. "Since the street protests erupted on Tuesday, police have confronted protesters with rubber-coated bullets, tear gas, water cannons and batons, and arrested more than 860 people. An independent coalition of lawyers said that at least 1,200 people had been detained. At least six people have also been killed."

Because the United States gives the Mubarak regime some \$1.3 billion per year in military aid — more than \$28 billion over three decades, according to the U.S. government — it's possible some of the protesters could have been killed with weapons supplied by U.S. tax dollars. Al Jazeera noted that attempts by the Egyptian government to censor social networking websites has not been entirely successful. "Our correspondent said the protesters seemed determined and continued to gather at various locations, despite the crackdown," Al Jazeera [reported](#) January 27. "Protesters have constantly regrouped, using Facebook and Twitter to galvanize and co-ordinate their demonstrations."

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was notably ambiguous in a [press statement](#) from Jordan on January 26. "We believe strongly that the Egyptian Government has an important opportunity at this



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moment in time to implement political, economic, and social reforms to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people. The United States is committed to working with Egypt and with the Egyptian people to advance such goals." Just a day earlier, January 25, Clinton proclaimed the Egyptian government "stable," claiming that "our assessment is that the Egyptian Government is stable and is looking for ways to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people."

The rest of the White House is apparently not on the same page of vague pronouncements, as White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs didn't express confidence in the Mubarak regime, failing to give it an unequivocal endorsement. Asked about the regime by White House reporters on January 26, Gibbs [said](#):

Gibbs: ...we're working with — obviously we have a close and important ally in Egypt and they will continue to be.

Q: And as you stand today, you still back President Mubarak?

Gibbs: Again, Egypt is a strong ally.

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